

Message Text

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FOR ACTING SECRETARY ONLY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, SP

SUBJECT: IRVING BROWN'S MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER SUAREZ

1. FOLLOWING THE MEETING IRVING BROWN AND I HAD WITH THE KING ON FEBRUARY 8 (MADRID 1029), THE KING CALLED ME THE FOLLOWING MORNING TO SAY THAT HE HAD TALKED WITH PRIME MINISTER SUAREZ ABOUT BROWN. WHEN I TELEPHONED THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE TO SOUND THEM OUT REGARDING AN APPOINTMENT FOR BROWN, THEY PROMPTLY SUGGESTED FEBRUARY 14. BROWN FLEW IN FROM PARIS, MET WITH SUAREZ, AND DEPARTED THE SAME DAY FOR GENEVA WHERE HE WILL BE ATTENDING THE MEETING OF THE ILO GOVERNING BODY. I THOUGHT IT BEST FOR BROWN TO MEET WITH SUAREZ ALONE, SO THAT FOLLOWING RENDITION IS BROWN'S ACCOUNT TO THE LABATT.

2. THE MEETING LASTED FOR OVER AN HOUR, AND ASIDE FROM SUAREZ' CHIEF OF PROTOCOL(A CLOSE CONFIDENT OF SUAREZ), WHO ACTED AS INTERPRETER (BROWN SPEAKING IN FRENCH AND SUAREZ IN SPANISH), INCLUDED ONLY THE TWO PRINCIPALS. SUAREZ TOLD BROWN THAT HE HAD VERY MUCH LOOKED FORWARD TO MEETING HIM, AND HAD

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BEEN INFORMED OF BROWN'S MEETINGS WITH THE KING AND OTHER RANKING GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. THE PRIME MINISTER WENT RIGHT TO THE SUBJECT AND BROWN PRESENTED THE LABOR SCENARIO AS HE SAW IT IN SPAIN, MUCH AS HE HAD IN THE CONVERSATIONS WITH THE KING, VICE PRESIDENT LTGEN GUTIERREZ MELLADO, AND SYNDICAL RELATIONS MINISTER DE LA MATA. BROWN AGAIN STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF FREE TRADE UNIONISM IN A DEMOCRACY AND DISCUSSED

THE PROBLEMS POSED SHOULD THE COMMUNIST-DOMINATED WORKERS' COMMISSIONS (SWC) GAIN CONTROL OF SPAIN'S LABOR MOVEMENT. ALTHOUGH BROWN NOTED THAT SUCH REGIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATIONS AS THE BASQUE STV AND CERTAIN CATALAN TRADE UNIONS HAD IMPORTANT ROLES TO PLAY, IT WAS NONETHELESS THE SOCIALIST UGT UPON WHOSE SHOULDERS WOULD FALL THE MAIN BURDEN OF STANDING UP TO THE SWC NATIONWIDE. BROWN EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF QUICKLY FORMING TRADE UNION CADRES AROUND WHICH A MUCH LARGER TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP COULD BE FORMED, STRESSING THE URGENCY FACTOR WITH RESPECT TO ASSISTING THE UGT. HE MENTIONED THE SPECIFIC FINANCIAL NEED OF THE UGT AS BEING BETWEEN ONE HALF AND ONE MILLION DOLLARS.

3. THE PRIME MINISTER, SAID BROWN, AGREED COMPLETELY WITH HIS ANALYSIS OF THE LABOR SITUATION. HE SAID IT WAS NOT SO MUCH THE POLITICAL SITUATION THAT WORRIED HIM, FOR HE BELIEVED THAT TO BE PRETTY MUCH UNDER CONTROL NOW. RATHER, SUAREZ SAW ECONOMIC AND LABOR PROBLEMS AS THE CRUCIAL ONES AT THIS POINT. AS HE PUT IT, THE FUTURE OF A DEMOCRATIC SPAIN COULD WELL DEPEND ON THE NEXT TWO MONTHS AND HE AGREED THAT THE GOVT MUST SOMEHOW SUPPORT THE UGT. SUAREZ DID NOT CHOOSE TO COMMIT HIMSELF TO ANY PARTICULAR COURSE OF ACTION (E.G. A GOVT GUARANTEE BASED ON CONFISCATED UGT HOLDINGS AGAINST WHICH THE UGT COULD OBTAIN CREDIT), BUT REITERATED THAT THE GOVT WOULD HELP THE UGT.

4. SUAREZ EXPRESSED CERTAIN MISGIVINGS AS TO WHETHER THE UGT WAS DEPENDABLY "ANTI-COMMUNIST," AND THREW IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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CHARACTERIZATION OF MARXIST DURING THE ENSUING DISCUSSION OF THE UGT'S POLITICAL STANCE. BROWN WAS QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT MARXISM OF COURSE MEANT DIFFERENT THINGS TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE, AND TAKING IT FROM THERE, WENT ON TO SAY THAT THERE WAS NO QUESTION IN HIS MIND THAT THE UGT WAS CERTAINLY "NON-COMMUNIST." HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT A MORE "ANTI-COMMUNIST" POSTURE WOULD DEVELOP AS THE BATTLE AGAINST THE SWC WAS JOINED, BUT THAT UNTIL NOW - BEING STILL IN A SITUATION OF ILLEGALITY - SUCH A POSTURE WOULD HAVE CAUSED THE UGT MORE GRIEF THAN BENEFIT. HE THEN EXPLAINED THAT THE UGT WAS IN THE PROCESS OF DISENGAGING ITSELF FROM THE PAST, AND THIS INCLUDED A GRADUAL DISENGAGEMENT FROM THE COS (THE NATIONAL "UNITY OF ACTION" MECHANISM GROUPING THE UGT, SWC AND CHRISTIAN SOCIALIST USO). SUAREZ ACCEPTED BROWN'S EXPLANATION OF THE CAREFUL PATH THAT THE UGT FELT IT HAD TO TREAD IN ITS RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE COMMUNISTS, AND FLATLY REPEATED THAT HE WAS FOR HELPING THE UGT. HOWEVER, THE PRIME MINISTER TOLD BROWN THAT HE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT THERE WAS A DEFINITE RISK ATTACHED, I.E. THAT THE SWC MIGHT

BE ABLE TO TAKE OVER THE UGT. BROWNPMPZITTED THAT WAS INDEED A POSSIBILITY, BUT HE BELIEVED THAT THE UGT WOULD BE ABLE TO HOLD THEIR OWN IF THEY RECEIVED SOME ASSISTANCE.

5. SUAREZ THEN IN EFFECT THREW THE CHALLENGE BACK TO BROWN BY ASKING HIM IF HE WOULD ACCEPT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF WATCHING OVER OR MONITORING (THE FRENCH WORD "SURVEILLER" WAS USED) UGT DEVELOPMENTS. BROWN SAID THAT HE WAS QUITE PREPARED TO BE OF WHAT ASSISTANCE HE COULD, IT BEING UNDERSTOOD HE WOULD IN NO WAY WANT TO PLACE THE GOS IN AN EMBARRASSING POSITION. HE WOULD BE PREPARED TO RETURN TO SPAIN ANY TIME THE PRIME MINISTER FELT IT NECESSARY, ANY TIME THERE APPEARED TO BE PROBLEMS WITH THE UGT. BROWN MENTIONED THAT HE HAD A SPANISH-SPEAKING COLLEAGE (MIKE BOGGS) WHO WOULD BE COMING TO SPAIN OFF AND ON. SUAREZ INDICATED THAT HE PREFERRED THAT BROWN HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF "MONITORING" THE LABOR SITUATION, BUT ADDED THAT HE WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO MEET

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BOGGS WHEN HE CAME TO TOWN. BROWN TOLD US THAT IT CAME OUT VERY CLEARLY THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WISHED TO BE COMPLETELY ASSURED THAT THE AFL-CIO WOULD BE BEHIND HIM IF HE DECIDED TO HELP THE UGT.

6. SUAREZ WAS FULLY AWARE THAT THE SWC HAD OVERWHELMING SUPERIORITY WITH RESPECT TO FINANCIAL MEANS AND ORGANIZERS. WHEN BROWN POINTED OUT THAT SOME BUREAUCRATS IN THE OFFICIAL VERTICAL STRUCTURE (SSO - SYNDICAL ORGANIZATION) COULD JUST AS WELL WORK FOR COMMUNISTS AS FASCISTS, SUAREZ INDICATED THAT HE WAS AWARE OF THE DANGER OF THE SWC TAKING OVER THE SSO AND HAD SPECIFIC INTELLIGENCE REGARDING SWC INROADS INTO THE SSO. BROWN MENTIONED, IN THAT RESPECT, THAT THE BASQUE STV AND CERTAIN CATALAN TRADE UNIONS WERE PERHAPS IN A PARTICULARLY GOOD POSITION TO IN EFFECT TAKE OVER SOME OF THE MACHINERY AND ASSETS OF THE SSO VERTICAL STRUCTURE IN THEIR REGIONS. SUAREZ SAID THAT SUCH A TACTIC FOR A TAKEOVER BY NON-COMMUNIST UNIONS WAS FEASIBLE AND THAT "WE ARE WORKING IT OUT." STABLER

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